



Conflicting reports about how an Okotoks man fell to his death from a fourth-floor hotel balcony in Mexico are adding headache to heartache for his grieving family.

Christopher James Morin, 30, was found dead Thursday morning in Cancun, two days after arriving in the resort city on Mexico's east coast.

Morin's friend, Joseph Clayton, told police the pair had been drinking in the early morning hours at the hotel bar before the fall -- confirmed by hotel staff. He told police he went to bed at 3 a.m and didn't find out until after he awoke hours later that Morin had died.

Hotel staff found Morin's body around 6 a.m. and reported it to officials.

Morin died from head trauma as a result of the fall, the Novedades de Quintana Roo newspaper reported.

Morin's brother-in-law Kevin Brown said Morin may have been involved in a bar dispute earlier in the evening, Brown told Calgary radio station CHQR Friday.

Morin and Clayton had apparently been staying at the Costa Maya Barcelo since Wednesday.

Police are investigating to determine if the fall was accidental, if Morin was pushed off the balcony or if he jumped. Hotel officials said there had been no report of "scandal" from the room.

Novedades de Quintana Roo newspaper reported that police suspected Morin's death was a suicide.

Mexican police told the Herald they found alcohol, cocaine and marijuana in Morin's blood. In Canada, toxicology tests typically take three months.

The man's family could not be reached for comment about the latest comments from Mexican police.

Canadian Foreign Affairs say they are investigating the Mexican authorities' work, according to spokeswoman Eugene Cormier.

"We are in communication with the family and consular officials are in contact with local authorities who are investigating the circumstances of the death of the Canadian," she said.

Information about what did happen has been slow to trickle in for family.

"We unfortunately do not know all the details and do not wish to speculate until we know further," said Amanda Pawlitzki, Morin's cousin.

"This is a very sad time for us. He was a great guy. He's going to be missed."

Morin was a hard-working carpenter who excelled at building decks, Pawlitzki said.

"He actually really loved working; he'd work seven days a week if he wanted. He was really good at it."

Morin was a charismatic singer who occasionally performed with friends in a punk band called The Dabblers.

"That smile could melt ice. He'd love to sing, he had a great stage presence," Pawlitzki said, adding Morin had an iconic image of Johnny Cash, his favourite performer, tattooed on his arm.

He spent time in small towns like Okotoks, High River and Blackie, his cousin said.

"He loved his family, he loved to snowboard and be in music," she said.

For now, the family is trying to get as many answers as possible.

"When I heard this, I pretty much stopped breathing. I just got angry," Pawlitzki said.

"We do, however, want others to know Chris was an amazing person who loved life and enjoyed being on stage and being around friends and family," she said.

Family friends are trying to raise money to bring Morin's remains back to southern Alberta.

Macleod MP Ted Menzies said consular affairs has been in touch with the family and is assisting them.

"I've lost track of how many times I've talked to the family," he said Friday.

"Consular affairs have been in touch with the individuals in Mexico and have been helping out with the police investigation," he added.

The scant information available for families of victims who die on foreign soil only amplifies their heartache, according to a grieving Calgary mother.

Cher Ewing's daughter, Kristen Deyell, 20, was shot outside a Guadalajara, Mexico, nightclub in 2004. Her killer has never been caught.

"It's just a nightmare. The first few days you're in shock. Your frustration level builds, answers aren't available, the Canadian government doesn't seem able to provide assistance to the family who have suffered a murder or death in a foreign country. It's really unfortunate that it doesn't seem to be a priority to them. They have other things on their plate."

Ewing believes Mexican authorities botched her daughter's murder investigation. She'd like to see Foreign Affairs advocating internationally for victims' families and keep an eye on cases.

"If the Canadian government would provide them with an interpreter to work with them in dealing with the authorities, that's the big thing."

This is the second time this year an Albertan has died in the resort town after an apparent fall from a balcony.

In May, Jeff Toews, 33, had been vacationing with his wife and other couples when he was found suffering from serious injuries. Authorities said the man had fallen from his second-floor balcony after a night of heavy drinking.

At the time, his family said he had been attacked and that authorities released the report about the fall in order to protect the tourism industry.

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